SOCIETAS IRANOLOGICA EUROPÆA
ISTITUTO ITALIANO PER L'AFRICA E L'ORIENTE
ALMA MATER STUDIORUM – UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA, SEDE DI RAVENNA

Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europæa

held in Ravenna, 6-11 October 2003

Vol. II
Classical & Contemporary Iranian Studies

Edited by Antonio PANAINO & Riccardo ZIPOLI

MIMESIS
MILANO 2006

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Cover and title-page by Sara CIRCASSIA.
Electronic paste-up by Gian Pietro BASELLO (text) & Sara CIRCASSIA (plates).

Printed in Italy
by Associazione Culturale Mimesis
Via M. Pichi 3 – 20143 Milano
<www.mimesisedizioni.it>
ISBN 88-8483-464-5

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Safavids and Kalmyks in the 17th Century: A Preliminary Assessment

Kalmyk is the name by which the Mongol Oirats were known first to their Turkic neighbours and then to the Russians. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, under the military pressure of the Eastern Mongols and the Kazaks, the four Oirat tribes of the Torghut, Derbet, Khošut and Dzungar (or Čoros) began to leave their homeland in Western Mongolia and Dzungaria and move westwards. This migration continued over the following decades as a consequence of both the attacks of external enemies and the recurrent outbursts of internecine war among the different Oirat tribes.[1]

A glance at a limited number of historical dates and episodes will suffice to show the extent of the impact of this westward migration on the states and the societies whose territories lay in the path followed by the Kalmyk horde or bordered on the lands eventually occupied by the Kalmyks. Abu'l-Ġāzi Xān of Xive (1644-1664) maintained that the Kalmyks raided Xwārezm at the end of 1605 or at the beginning of 1606: they were the first Kalmyks to appear in that region "since the conversion of the Uzbeks to Islam".[2] The first diplomatic contacts between Russian authorities and a Kalmyk chief (Kho-Ürlük of the Torghuts) took place in the town of Tara, on the Irtyš river, in 1606. The developments of this episode show how, from the very beginning, Russians and Kalmyks understood these relations in completely different ways: as suzerain to a tribute-paying vassal for the former, and as between independent polities for the latter.[3] The Noghays encountered the first Kalmyks on the Emba river in 1608 – a meeting which boded ill for the Noghays, who were to suffer terribly at the hands of the newcomers in the following decades.[4] As early as 1614, the governor of the Russian city of Samara sent an expedition against them.[5] In 1616

[1] R. Grousset, *L'empire des steppes* (Paris, 1939), pp. 600-601; M. Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks and the Muscovite Southern Frontier, 1600-1670", *Russian History/Histoire Russe*, 15, 2-4 (1988), pp. 225-226. For an outline of the different stages of the Kalmyk advance, cf. Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 225-241.

[2] *Histoire des Mogols et des Tatares par Aboul-Ghâzi Bèhâdour Khan*, ed. and French transl. Baron Desmaisons, 2 vols. (S. Petersburg, 1871-1874), vol. II, p. 296. Abu'l-Ġāzi Xān was born on 15 Rabiʿ I 1014/31 July 1605 (on 16 Rabiʿ I 1012/24 August 1603 according to B. Spuler, "Abu'l-Ġāzī", in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. I, p. 292 and *idem*, "Abu'l-Ghāzī Bahādur Khān", in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. I, p. 120; on 15 Rabiʿ II 1014/29 August 1605 according to Shir Muhammad Mirab Munis & Muhammad Riza Mirab Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbāl. History of Khorezm*, ed. and English transl. Y. Bregel [Leiden-Boston-Köln, 1999], p. 43), and he stated that the Kalmyk raid took place about five months after his birth: *see Histoire des Mogols*, vol. II, pp. 312-313. However, the same raid took place two years earlier (end of 1603 or beginning of 1604) according to the later Munis & Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbāl*, pp. 39-40.

[3] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 225-227.

[4] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 228.

[5] C. Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga entre l'Empire russe et l'Empire ottoman sous le règne de Pierre le Grand", *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 7 (1966), n. 1 p. 64.

Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europæa, vol. II (Milano 2006)
Edited by A. PANAINO & R. ZIPOLI
ISBN 88-8483-464-5

they were mentioned in a letter sent by Tsar Michail Fëdorovič as a nuisance to both Russians and Uzbeks.[6] By the mid-1620s the Kalmyks had become an endemic threat to the Uzbek and Turkmen tribes living in Xwārezm.[7] In 1630 the Torghut chief Kho-Ürlük moved his autumn camp to the Karakum desert, that is, directly on the route between Boxārā and Russia: from then on the Kalmyks "had to be taken into account by practically all Bukharan ambassadors and traders travelling to Muscovy".[8] In Šavvāl 1042 (11 April – 9 May 1633), the Safavid governor of Marv reported that a horde of Kalmyks and Kazaks was besieging Tāškand, while others were pillaging the surroundings of Boxārā.[9] Starting with that year, they seem to have raided the khanate of Boxārā more frequently than in the previous years.[10] In the same year, the Kalmyks reached the surroundings of Astrachan' for the first time.[11] Briefly, within the few decades after their arrival into these new territories, the Kalmyks proved themselves to be extremely dangerous neighbours, although it took them some years to become the masters of the Caspian steppe. All the peoples surrounding them had to bear the brunt of their attacks. In the 1630s they obliged the Noghays, who were probably their favourite victims, to leave the pastures between the Volga and the Ural' rivers and seek the protection first of the Russian forces at Astrachan', then of the Ottoman-held fortress of Azov, and eventually of the Crimean Tatars. Other Noghay groups were compelled to flee southwards into the Caucasus region, or even joined the Kalmyks.[12] In 1639 the Kalmyks subdued the Turkmens of Mangyšlak.[13] During the same period, the Kalmyks raided the Russian cities in Siberia to the north and the Uzbek teritories to the south. They disrupted the caravan trade among Russia, Central Asia and Persia to the point of inducing the ruler of Xive, Esfandiyār Xān (1623-1642), to ask the Tsar twice to join in an alliance against them.[14] The safety of the roads between Russia and Central Asia however did not improve, seen by the fact that in 1640 Nadr Moḥammad Xān of Boxārā (1640-1645) suggested a joint military action to the Tsar, and around 1680 Anuše Xān of Xive (1662 or 1663-1684 or 1685) invited the Tsar (and not for the first time) to build a fortress on the peninsula of Mangyšlak.[15] In the case of the khanate of Boxārā as well, the Kalmyks did not limit themselves to pillaging raids. For instance, a large-scale attack was mounted in 1643 by a combined Dzungar Kalmyk-Kirgiz force. Although the Kazaks were the main target in this case, the Bukharan army was obliged to intervene.[16] Since the beginning of the seventeenth century the Kalmyks had taken part in the wars among the Uzbek states as

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[6] A. Burton, *The Bukharans. A Dynastic, Diplomatic and Commercial History, 1550-1702* (Richmond, 1997), p. 508.

[7] *Histoire des Mogols*, vol. II, pp. 322-325.

[8] Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 178.

[9] Moḥammad Maʿṣum b. Xwājegi Eṣfahāni, *Xolāṣat as-siyar*, ed. I. Afšār (Tehran, 1368), pp. 160-161; Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 182.

[10] Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 183-184.

[11] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 232.

[12] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 231-232.

[13] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 234. *Cf.* also Y. Bregel, "Čawdor", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Supplement, pp. 168-169; *idem*, "Mangıshlak", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Supplement, pp. 416-417.

[14] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 234; Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 184.

[15] Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 201-202 and 325.

[16] Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 219-221.

well as in their domestic struggles.[17] Thus, for instance, in 1636 the Kalmyks supported the Kazaks who had rebelled against Emāmqoli Xān of Boxārā (1611-1641),[18] but in 1689 Ayuki Khan "greatly contributed towards saving the khanate" of Boxārā, invaded by Ārang Xān of Xive (1688 or 1689-1694), through attacking the latter's territory.[19] In 1712, it was again Ayuki who placed Yādgār Xān (1712-1713) on the throne of Xive thanks to the intervention of a Kalmyk expeditionary force.[20] In contrast, the Kalmyks seem to have got along remarkably well with the Cossacks: in 1642, they signed a treaty with the Don Host.[21] In the years around 1640, the Khošut Kalmyks invaded Tibet and restored the Dalai Lama to power, after defeating his political and religious enemies.[22]

Of course, sometimes things went awry for the Kalmyks as well. For instance, in 1644 the Torghuts were harshly defeated by a combined Kabardan-Noghay force in Kabarda (Kho-Ürlük himself fell in this battle) and by the Russians near Samara.[23] As a result of these setbacks their westward expansion was temporarily halted, but it resumed in earnest towards the end of the 1640s. Indeed, it was only in these years that the bulk of the Torghut Kalmyks relocated to new pastures along the Volga, although they had already crossed the river many times in the past during their forays against the Noghays and the Tatars.[24] In 1649, a Venetian envoy to Šāh ʿAbbās II (1642-1666), the Dominican Father Antonio da Fiandra, reported to the Venetian Senate that the overland route from Russia to Persia was threatened by "Tatars, Mongols and Kalmyks, common enemies of the Muscovites".[25] In the early 1650s the Kalmyks increased their raids against the Crimean Tatars and the Noghays, eventually forcing some groups of the latter to find shelter beyond the Dnepr.[26] In the 1660s they supported Russia in the war against Poland, thus extending the range of their forays as far as the Polish territory.[27] In 1684 (during the War of the Holy League against

[17] Moḥammad Ebrāhim b. Zeyno'l-ʿĀbedin Naṣiri, *Dastur-e Šahriyārān*, ed. M. N. Naṣiri Moqaddam (Tehran, 1373), pp. 139, 282; Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 127.

[18] Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 188.

[19] Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 344.

[20] Munis & Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbāl*, n. 302 p. 571.

[21] Quoted from <http://kalm.ru/en/cossacks.html>. Despite occasional clashes, the Kalmyks seem to have enjoyed friendly relations with both the Don and the Zaporože Cossacks: *see* Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 239-242, 249-250. On raids by the Jaik Cossacks (who were the geographically closest to the Kalmyks among the three Cossack Hosts), *see* Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 245.

[22] Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, p. 603; J. Miyawaki, "The Birth of the Oyirad Khanship", *Central Asiatic Journal*, 41, 1 (1997), p. 64; *idem*, "The Legitimacy of Khanship among the Oyirad (Kalmyk) Tribes in Relation to the Chinggisid Principle", in R. Amitai-Preiss & D. O. Morgan (eds.), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 323-324. The Khošut played a very important role in the domestic politics of Tibet until 1717, when they were defeated by the Čoros: *see* Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, pp. 603-604.

[23] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 237 and 238.

[24] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 239-240, 252.

[25] G. Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia* (Torino, 1865), p. 225. One may wonder if the "Tatars" who were blocking the route from Moscow to Astrachan' around 1665 were (at least in part) Kalmyks as well: *see* J. Kolmaš, "The first Europeans in Lhasa", in J. Prosecký (ed.), *Ex Pede Pontis. Papers presented on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Oriental Institute, Prague* (Praha, 1992), p. 106.

[26] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 239-240.

[27] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 249.

the Ottomans), the Papal Nuncio at the Polish court, Pallavicini chose a Catholic missionary, the Theatine Father Bonesana, to bring the Pope's gold to the Cossacks who were subjects of the King of Poland. Bonesana was also commissioned to convince the Kalmyks to raid Crimea.[28] Support for Russia did not mean that the Kalmyks had forfeited or renounced their own independent political action. On occasion, they also attacked the Russians despite their erstwhile support, as, for instance, the pillaging raid against Kazan' led by Ayuki Khan in 1682.[29] Kalmyk warriors accompanied Peter the Great on his 1711 campaign against the Ottomans and served as a rear-guard during his Persian campaign of 1722.[30] However, in 1716, the Kalmyks harassed the troops of Prince Bekovič-Čerkasskij during their march on Xive.[31]

The general situation of instability in the Caspian region created by the presence of the Kalmyks is clearly mirrored by the Safavid sources, in spite of the relatively small number of references to them. In 1613, a Russian ambassador was warned about the possibility of meeting the Kalmyks between the Ural' and the Emba while on his way to Persia.[32] It is more than reasonable to suppose that he then reported to the Safavid court about their presence on his route. Furthermore, Persia too was directly exposed to Kalmyk raids, although it does not seem to have been one of their main targets. It is also likely that it took several years for the Kalmyks to reach the Safavid borders with their raids. Indeed, they are not mentioned by the *Fotuḥāt-e fereyduniye*, which narrates the campaigns waged against the Turkomans by Fereydun Xān Čarkas, the governor of Astarābād, between 1607 and 1613-14.[33] However, during the reign of Šāh ʿAbbās II they threatened Astarābād, Nesā and Abivard and fought against Safavid forces.[34] In 1070 (18 September 1659 – 5 September 1660), Šāh ʿAbbās II sent a body of 5,000 soldiers (a relatively large number by Safavid military standards) as a reinforcement to the garrison of Astarābād to fend off their attacks.[35] The Italian traveller Gemelli Careri, who visited Persia in 1694, stated that the Safavid forces employed boats on the Caspian Sea to fight against the Kalmyks.[36] His words

[28] F. de Bojani, *Innocent XI. Sa correspondance avec ses nonces*, 3 vols. (Roma, 1910-1912), vol. III, pp. 881-882.

[29] Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, p. 601.

[30] Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", pp. 71-72.

[31] R. Létolle, "Les expéditions de Bekovitch-Tcherkassy en Turkestan (1714-1717) et le début de l'infiltration russe en Asie centrale", *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 5-6 (1998), p. 269; Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", pp. 71-72.

[32] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", n. 11 p. 228. The ambassador was probably Michail Tichanov, who was sent to Persia in 1614 in order to inform Šāh ʿAbbās I of the accession of Michail Fëdorovič Romanov (1613-1645) to the Russian throne and ask for help in recovering Astrachan' from the Cossacks who were holding it: *see* Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 141; R. Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests. Diplomatic Relations between Iran and Russia, 1587-1639", in M. Mazzaoui (ed.), *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors* (Salt Lake City, 2003), p. 118.

[33] Moḥammad Ṭāher Besṭāmi, *Fotuḥāt-e fereyduniye*, eds. S. S. Mir Moḥammad Ṣādeq & M. N. Naṣiri Moqaddam (Tehran, 1380).

[34] Moḥammad Ṭāher Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, ed. E. Dehgān (Arāk, 1329), pp. 201-204, 215.

[35] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, p. 266.

[36] *Giro del Mondo del dottor D. Gio. Francesco Gemelli Careri. Nuova edizione accresciuta [...]* (Venezia, 1728), p. 241. The Safavids did not have a real navy: cf. W. Floor, "The Iranian Navy in the Gulf during the Eighteenth Century", *Iranian Studies*, 20 (1987): pp. 31-37; *idem*, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa, 2001), pp. 199-200. An attempt to protect the Caspian coast from Cossack raids with a barrage, made of small boats linked together with chains and manned by soldiers, ended in tragedy around

parallel the account of the Venetian ambassador at the Porte, Giacomo Querini, who reported in 1676 that the Kalmyks had threatened the fortress of Azov, thus compelling the Ottomans to maintain a strong naval force in the Black Sea during the previous three years.[37] Similarly, in 1643 the Russians were patrolling the Volga with boats loaded with musketeers in order to prevent the Kalmyks from crossing the river.[38] In 1107 (12 August 1695 – 30 July 1696), the Kalmyk supreme ruler Ayuki sent 5,000 warriors to Dorun upon the request of the local population which was seeking protection; instead of affording the protection the population had hoped for, the Kalmyks looted everything.[39]

Of course the Kalmyks not only raided and looted but also traded, especially with Russian towns. Indeed, "the issue of trade was of crucial importance to the Kalmyks" in their relations with the Russian government.[40] Trade also flourished between the Kalmyk tribes and the khanate of Boxārā, and the Kalmyk and Oirat chiefs often employed Bukharan merchants as trading agents.[41] Abu'l-Ġāzi Xān reported that in 1648 a Khošut Kalmyk raid took place while a Torghut chief was his trading guest in Xwārezm.[42] It is more than likely, therefore, that some commercial contacts also existed between Safavid Persia and the Kalmyks, at least between the southernmost Kalmyk bands and the northernmost cities of the Safavid empire. The Armenian Dominican father Petrus Bedik described the Safavid *ġolām*s as divided into two groups: those who were bought to serve in the army and those who entered the Safavid service voluntarily. Among the peoples who provided slaves he also included the Kalmyks.[43] Some decades later, during the Afsharid period, we find Kalmyk *ġolām*s in the service of Nāder Šāh (1736-1747), which may confirm the existence of a similar practice in Safavid times.[44]

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1669: cf. *idem*, *Safavid Government Institutions*, p. 200; F. Richard, *Raphaël du Mans missionnaire en Perse au XVIIe s.*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1995), vol. II, pp. 356-359. The incident suggests an attempt at adapting the Ottoman *tabor* to naval warfare rather than at creating a fleet. A few years earlier, shortly after 1654, Šāh ʿAbbās II had ordered the creation of a battery of artillery (*tupxāne*) on the Ottoman model: cf. Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, p. 186.

37 L. Firpo (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, vol. XIII (Torino, 1984), p. 954. Querini called the Kalmyks "vassals (*dipendenti*) of the Muscovites", a statement which was of course only partly true.

38 Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 236.

39 Moḥammad Ebrāhim Naṣiri, *Dastur-e Šahriyārān*, p. 140.

40 Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 226-227, 242, and *passim*. In 1725, an Astrachan'-based Indian merchant ran a trade with the Kalmyks through two Muslim partners: *see* S. F. Dale, *Indian merchants and Eurasian trade, 1600-1750* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 120.

41 *See* for instance Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 430-431 and also 510-511, 519; *cf.* also pp. 411-412 (on the routes connecting Boxārā and the Kalmyk territories) and 429-432 (on Kalmyk-Bukharan trade in general). Both primary sources and modern scholarship agree that needles were in high demand among the Kalmyks: *see* Seyyed ʿAli Akbar Xaṭā'i, *Xaṭāynāme*, ed. I. Afšār (Tehran, 1357), p. 171; Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 389 and 431.

42 *Histoire des Mogols*, vol. II, p. 346.

43 P. Bedik, *Cehil sutun* (Wien, 1678), p. 264. Around 1671 some Kalmyks were serving in the armies of Balx: *see* Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 297 (it is not specified whether they were mercenaries or slaves). Astrachan' was one of the markets where Kalmyk slaves could be bought: *see* Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 380.

44 Moḥammad Kāẓem Marvi Vazir-e Marv, *ʿĀlamārā-ye Nāderi*, ed. M. A. Riyāḥi, 3 vols. (Tehran, 1369) (II ed.), vol. I, p. 396; vol. II, p. 761; vol. III, p. 1073. For some references to Kalmyks in the service of the khans of Boxārā and Xwārezm, *see* Moḥammad Kāẓem Marvi, *ʿĀlamārā-ye Nāderi*, vol. II, pp. 595 and 680; vol. III, p. 934; Munis & Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbāl*, n. 375 p. 582, n. 648 p. 613 and above all n. 381 p. 584.

In seventeenth-century Safavid Persia the Kalmyks seem to have been considered simply another Uzbek tribe.[45] To my knowledge, the first reference to the Kalmyks in Persian narrative sources of the Safavid period can be found in ʿAli Akbar Xaṭā'i's *Xaṭāynāme*. However, this work was penned in the Ottoman empire and dedicated to Selim I (1512-1520), and it is unlikely to have had much circulation in Persia.[46] Moreover, at that time the Kalmyks were still roaming in their ancestral territories, that is, very distant from the borders of the Safavid state. Mirzā Moḥammad Ṭāher Vaḥid Qazvini, the author of the *ʿAbbāsnāme*, wrote that near Māručāq the Uzbek ruler, Nadr Moḥammad Xān, met the "Kalmyk tribes and the other Uzbek tribes" *(ṭavāyef-e Qalmāq va sāyer-e ṭavā'ef-e Ozbakiye*), which had come to pay homage to him after rebelling against him.[47] This view of the origins of the Kalmyks appears to be indirectly supported by the account of Domenico de Santis, a Venetian envoy to Šāh ʿAbbās II. While he was marching towards Astrachan' on his way back to Venice in December 1647 or, at the latest, January 1648, he was obliged to return to Darband by the presence of a large party of (in his words) "Čaġatāy" raiders who were chasing a group of runaway fellow tribesmen "who had settled down in the land of the Lezgians".[48] In my opinion, the so-called "Čaġatāys" were rather Kalmyk warriors engaged in one of their attacks against the Noghays, of whom a part had moved to the Caucasus region in order to escape the military pressure of the Kalmyks. De Santis does not seem to have travelled in the region earlier, and he may have been informed about the "Čaġatāys" (that is, the Kalmyks) in Šamāxi, where he subsequently spent five months during that winter.[49] If this is the case, his words would reflect the view of the Kalmyks that prevailed in Persia at that time.

Although the Safavids were poorly informed about the origins of the Kalmyks, their perception of the latter seems to have been quite clear. As Buddhists they could not be included among the *ahl al-kitāb*, and their manners and habits as nomads were not likely to have put them in a favourable light in the eyes of refined men of letters and courtiers such as the authors of the Safavid chronicles of the second half of the seventeenth century.[50] As

[45] Mongols as well had often been considered or perceived as Turks in mediaeval Persia. *See* for instance B. G. Fragner, "Mīr ʿAlī Šēr Navā'ī: The 'Judgement' Reconsidered", in É. M. Jeremiás (ed.), *Irano-Turkic Cultural Contacts in the 11th-17th Centuries* (Piliscsaba, 2003), pp. 61-62; M. Maróth, "The Library of Sultan Bayazit II", *ibidem*, pp. 113-114 and above all n. 13 p. 114; C. Melville, "History and Myth: the Persianisation of Ghazan Khan", *ibidem*, n. 31 p. 141; A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Conscience du passé et résistance culturelle dans l'Iran mongol", in D. Aigle (ed.), *L'Iran face à la domination mongole* (Tehran, 1997), p. 148.

[46] ʿAli Akbar Xaṭā'i, *Xaṭāynāme*, p. 2. Two of the four known manuscripts listed by Iraj Afšār in the introduction to his edition of the work are in Istanbul and one is in Cairo, while the fourth (in Paris) seems to be a copy of one of those in Istanbul: *see* ʿAli Akbar Xaṭā'i, *Xaṭāynāme*, pp. 8-9.

[47] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, p. 82.

[48] Venice, Archivio di Stato, *Collegio, Relazioni*, busta 25, fascicolo Q, n. 1, fol. 9a.

[49] Abu'l-Ġāzi Xān noted that winter did not stop Kalmyk forays: *see Histoire des Mogols*, vol. II, pp. 322-325. *Cf.* also M. Khodarkovsky, "War and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Muscovite and Kalmyk Societies as Viewed in One Document: Reinterpreting the Image of the 'Perfidious' Nomad", *Central and Inner Asian Studies*, 3 (1989), p. 45.

[50] The Kalmyks began to embrace the Tibetan denomination of Buddhism early in the seventeenth century: *see* Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, pp. 592-594, 602; Miyawaki, "The Birth of the Oyirad Khanship", pp. 61-63; S. Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 169-170.

far as religion is concerned, this stance is not surprising nor isolated: Moḥammad Rabiʿ b. Moḥammad Ebrāhim, the author of the *Safine-ye Soleymāni* and the historian of the Safavid embassy to Siam, wrote that the Siamese (who were certainly much more refined than the Kalmyks), being Buddhist, belonged to the "people of lust and contempt".[51] Vaḥid Qazvini called the Kalmyks *mošrekān* and *kafare*, and described them as a people wild, ruthless and without religion.[52] In a concise way, he said that they outwardly resemble human beings but that they are actually closer to animals.[53] About thirty years later, Moḥammad Ebrāhim b. Zeyno'l-ʿābedin Naṣiri, the author of the *Dastur-e Šahriyārān*, wrote that the Kalmyks were the co-religionists (*hamkišān*) of the Turkmens and of the inhabitants of Mangyšlak. Interestingly enough, he dubbed the Turkmens as *kafare* as well.[54] Ordered chronologically between the chronicles of these two Muslim authors is the work of Petrus Bedik, a Persian-born Armenian Catholic. Unlike Vaḥid Qazvini and Moḥammad Ebrāhim Naṣiri, he paid more attention to the way of life of the Kalmyks rather than to their religion. Petrus Bedik wrote that the Kalmyks were "more barbarous" (*barbariores*, *et abjectiores*) than their neighbours, the Uzbeks: they not only fed upon horses, sheep and cows, but they did not refrain from eating any sort of animals including dogs, cats, mice, bears, wolves and lizards. They did not know agriculture and did not bake bread, which they however occasionally bought in Russian towns.[55] Bedik also stated that the Kalmyks, as well as the Lezgians of Daghestan, used to sell their own children at a cheap price. As for the Lezgians, they were said to be "most ferocious" (*ferocissimi*) but were nonetheless "more human" (*humaniores*) than the Uzbeks and the Kalmyks.[56] The words of the three authors mentioned above confirm Rudi Matthee's statement, according to which "the pagan peoples on Iran's periphery embodied the antithesis of civilization in Safavid eyes".[57] Yet this held true for all those peoples that, for one reason or another and to different degrees, be they pagan or not, did not meet the Safavid standards of refinement and civilization. Thus, Vaḥid Qazvini's words about the beastly nature of the Kalmyks certainly indicate a deep rejection of their culture, but they should not be taken at face value. Rather, they are probably meant as a literary device to describe as graphically as possible these foreign peoples' lack of civilization. Indeed, according to the same author, the Shamkhal of Tarku as well once wrote to Šāh ʿAbbās II stating that his own Daghestani subjects were just animals in human shape.[58] The Daghestanis, needless to say, were Muslim and sedentary and, as we saw, according to Petrus Bedik they were "more human" than the Muslim Uzbeks and the Buddhist Kalmyks,

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[51] Moḥammad Rabiʿ b. Moḥammad Ebrāhim, *Safine-ye soleymāni*, ed. ʿA. Fāruqi (Tehran, 1378) (II ed.), p. 109; *The Ship of Sulaymān*, English transl. J. O'Kane (London, 1972), p. 111.

[52] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, pp. 201-203, 224.

[53] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, p. 201.

[54] Moḥammad Ebrāhim Naṣiri, *Dastur-e Šahriyārān*, p. 242.

[55] Bedik, *Cehil sutun*, pp. 336-337. That the Kalmyks lacked bread is confirmed in J. Potocki, *Voyage dans les steps* (sic) *d'Astrakhan et du Caucase*, ed. J. Klaproth, 2 vols. (Paris, 1829), vol. I, pp. 24-25 and 83. The Kalmyks ate anything, snakes included, according to *L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī, historien ottoman du XVIe siècle*, ed. and French transl. J. Matuz (Paris, 1968), p. 74. For analogously negative remarks on Thai eating habits, *cf.* Moḥammad Rabiʿ, *Safine-ye soleymāni*, pp. 154-155; *The Ship of Sulaymān*, p. 157.

[56] Bedik, *Cehil sutun*, p. 338.

[57] R. Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West", *Iranian Studies*, 31, 2 (1998), p. 225. For some negative Safavid stereotypes on the Arabs and other Muslim peoples, *cf.* Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination", pp. 222-225.

[58] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, p. 274.

who therefore seem to rank lowest among the neighbours of Safavid Persia.[59] The descriptions of the Kalmyks by Vaḥid Qazvini, Petrus Bedik and Moḥammad Ebrāhim Naṣiri do not sound very different in their overall tone from the account of the Crimean Tatars given by the Venetian diplomat Angelo Alessandri (1637): according to him, the Tatars are used to endure any kind of hardship and often behave more like wild animals rather than like rational human beings; "many of them" do not know bread; in the course of one meal they eat the quantity of food needed for four or five days, and if in that period of time they still feel hungry they bleed their horses to drink the blood.[60] In his turn Alessandri closely echoed Ammianus Marcellinus' words on the Huns, especially when he wrote that in case of necessity, for instance during military campaigns when there is no time to light a fire, the Crimean Tatars used to "heat up" raw meat by putting it between the saddle and the back of their horses. The Huns were also supposed to be "prodigiously ugly" (*prodigiose deformes*) and ignorant of the notions of good and evil like beasts (*inconsultorum animalium ritu, quid honestum inhonestumve sit, penitus ignorantes*).[61] Analogously, Petrus Bedik's remarks on the eating habits of the Kalmyks recall the words ascribed by Ferdowsi to Yazdgird III (631-651) about the "lizard-eating" Arabs.[62] It seems that the dislike of the sedentary for the nomad, coupled with lack of adequate information on the latter's habits and way of life, distrust (the nomad being typically perceived as volatile and treacherous) and fear (the Crimean Tatars, as vassals and allies of the Porte, provided the Ottoman armies with much-feared

[59] According to S. Najmabadi (ed.), *Moḫtaṣar-e Mofīd des Moḥammad Mofīd Mostoufī*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1989), vol. I, p. 375, the Daghestanis were "extremely wicked" (*dar nehāyat-e šarārat va badḏāti and*) and given to robbery. Conversely, the inhabitants of Tabarsarān and of the Land of the Makers of Mail (*velāyat-e zerehgarān*, that is, the Kubachi people) are described separately and said to be very hospitable and completely devoted to their form of handicraft: *see* Najmabadi (ed.), *Moḫtaṣar-e Mofīd*, vol. I, p. 297. Of course, the traditional way of life of the Tabasarans and the Kubachis did not differ radically from that of the other peoples of Daghestan, to which they belong from a geographical and linguistic point of view. One must assume that Moḥammad Mofid Mostowfi was writing here under the influence of factors other than purely geographical and ethnological data. The nomadic Kazaks, in their turn, were considered as combining "Islamic observance with pagan practices" and appeared "like wolves, dressed in hides" to the more refined inhabitants of Central Asia: *see* Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 20-21, 432.

[60] M. P. Pedani-Fabris (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, vol. XIV (Padova, 1996), pp. 662-663.

[61] Pedani-Fabris (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, pp. 662-663; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, XXXI, 2, 2 and 11. On their manner to warm up meat, *cf.* Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 2 and 3. As far as Ammianus is concerned, however, "his information is far from first hand, and almost none of what he says can be trusted [...] The historian has taken ideas and passages from ancient ethnographers and combined them in such a way as to make the Huns seem as uncivilized as possible [...] Some of Ammianus' descriptions of Hunnic society are drawn nearly verbatim from Pompeius Trogus and Livy": *see* D. Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London and New York, 2002), p. 226. Ammianus' stereotyped view of the Huns as described by Rohrbacher certainly reminds one of Vaḥid Qazvini's stance towards the Kalmyks and the Daghestanis, outlined above. Similarly, Aurelius Victor's explanation that "the German Magnentius revolted from the empire because of the 'fierce and savage mind of the barbarian' " may bring to mind the connection established by Safavid writers between the traditional unrulyness of the Lor and Afšār tribesmen and their "natural wickedness": *see* Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, p. 231; Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination", p. 223. On other depictions of the Huns provided by 4th and 5th century historians, *cf.* Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, pp. 225-228 and, on the latter's opinions about the Barbarians in general (opinions which are far from being uniformly negative), pp. 230-236.

[62] Firdousī, *Šāch-nāme*, vol. IX, ed. A. E. Bertel's (Moskva, 1971), n. 18 p. 322 (the editors considered the passage in question to be a spurious addition to Ferdowsi's text). On two Arabic antecedents (*apud* Ṭabarī and Abū Nuwās) of the famous verses ascribed to Ferdowsi, *cf.* M. Omidsālār, "Dar bāre-ye 'ze šir-e šotor xwordan va susmār ...' ", *Irānšenāsi*, 13, 4 (1380/2002), pp. 773-775.

light horsemen and were the scourge of the Poles and of all Central and Eastern Europe) often produced similar results in different countries and epochs,[63] but not always. For instance, a more "neutral" observer like Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a layman and a Western European, who briefly described the Kalmyks, elaborated more on their unusual physical appearance than on their culture and manners. Tavernier praised the military qualities of the Kalmyks, only mentioning the fact that they were bitter enemies of the Muslims and had a "distinctive" religion (*toute particulière*).[64] Indeed, even the beauty of the Kalmyks was praised: an Ottoman author, Seyfi Çelebi went as far as to say that they were "extremely beautiful".[65] Earlier the same author wrote that the Kalmyks resembled the Tatars in their way of fighting and looting their neighbours (*bu Qalmaq Tatar gibidür*).[66] Although he knew that they were heathen, Seyfi praised their bravery and, generally speaking, does not seem to have been very hostile to them. According to Joseph Matuz, we know almost nothing of Seyfi's life,[67] so we do not know if he had any personal connection with Central or Inner Asia which would have made him more sympathetic towards the Kalmyks. However, even in his work the cliché of the "non-human barbarian" did not disappear entirely. Perhaps owing to his own acquaintance with the region, Seyfi simply extended the border between civilization and barbarity, humanity and utter savagery: on the frontiers of the Muslim khanate of Sibir, he wrote, "bizarre" peoples live who have an "amazing" physical appearance, speak languages unknown to all, have no religion and look like animals.[68]

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[63] In ancient Babylonia, for instance, it was said of the Gutians that they did not perform "proper religious rites", and they were described as being of "human face, dog's cunning, monkey's build": *see* M. van de Mieroop, "Gutians", in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. XI, p. 409.

[64] J.-B. Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Turquie et de Perse*, ed. S. Yerasimos, 2 vols. (Paris, 1981), vol. II, pp. 60-61. Petrus Bedik also remarked that the Kalmyks were the mortal foes of the Crimeans: *see* Bedik, *Cehil sutun*, p. 336.

[65] *L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī*, p. 74.

[66] *L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī*, pp. 72-73.

[67] *L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī*, pp. 13-15. Certainly he used the Central Asian form *Qalmaq* instead of the Ottoman *Qalmuq*: *see L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī*, n. 1 p. 70. G. Hagen, "Ottoman Understandings of the World in the Seventeenth Century", in R. Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality. The World of Evliya Çelebi* (Leiden and Boston, 2004), n. 29 p. 223 states that Seyfi Çelebi's "fancyful" accounts of China and India were "certainly not based on the experience of a traveler", without elaborating further. The author of the *Xaṭāynāme* also did not display a hostile attitude towards the Kalmyks: *see* ʿAli Akbar Xaṭā'i, *Xaṭāynāme*, pp. 147, 167-173 in particular. This may indicate that ʿAli Akbar was to some extent familiar with them, either because of his geographical origin or of his being a trader: indeed, his *nisba* Xaṭā'i seems to point to an Eastern Turkestani birthplace or a long-time acquaintance with China, or at least with its surrounding regions. This is what happened in Venice less than two centuries earlier, when two local merchants were mentioned in mid-14th-century official and legal documents by name, family name and the nickname *del Chataio* or *a Catayo*: *see* U. Tucci, "Mercanti veneziani in Asia lungo l'itinerario poliano", in L. Lanciotti (ed.), *Venezia e l'Oriente* (Firenze, 1987), p. 317. Be it as it may, first-hand experience could indeed lead to a positive view of the *mores* of the Barbarians. For instance, the Greek historian Priscus, who visited the court of Attila in 448-449 as a member of a Byzantine embassy, met a former Greek slave there who purportedly described the life among the Huns in highly positive terms. Admittedly, the Greek has been considered as a fictional character, and the whole episode as a device indirectly to criticize the current moral decay of the empire: *see* Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, pp. 85, 90-91. However, one may remark the fact that "Ammianus describes the barbarians across the frontier as bestial while judging barbarians in Roman service, with whom he had lived and worked for many years, by the full range of criteria which he applies to Romans": *see* Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, p. 232.

[68] *L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī*, pp. 88-89. He meant perhaps the Ugric peoples of the Voguls and the Ostyaks (also known as Mansy and Khanty): *see L'ouvrage de Seyfī Çelebī*, p. 37 and n. 39 p. 89.

Yet, in spite of all the shortcomings the Kalmyks may have had in the eyes of observers belonging to urban and sedentary societies, their military might was a factor that had to be reckoned with. In 1633-34 Russian sources put the strength of the Torghut tribe at more than 20,000 horsemen, while another source claimed that in the 1670s Ayuki's army was 40,000 strong.[69] The Torghut alone were supposed to number around 50,000 tents in 1643.[70] During the Polish-Russian war of 1660-1667 the Kalmyks could put on the field as many as 20,000 warriors at a time.[71] The number of the Kalmyks who migrated back to Dzungaria in 1771 has been put at 150,000, corresponding to about two-thirds of their whole population.[72] The first written agreement between Russia and the Kalmyks was signed in February 1655,[73] and on 26 February 1673 Ayuki himself paid homage to the Russian governor of Astrachan' as the Tsar's "loyal vassal".[74] Indeed, the Russians considered the Kalmyks as the Tsar's subject from the very beginning of their relations.[75] However, the Kalmyk chiefs rather viewed their relationship with the Tsar as one between peers and allies, and not as that of a subject to his ruler: certainly, not as a relation in which they played the role of the subjects. The Kalmyk-Russian treaty of 1655 was phrased as an oath of allegiance taken by the Kalmyk chiefs to their new suzerain but, as Khodarkovsky put it,

> the subject status of the Kalmyks, besides the phraseology of the document, was not reinforced with any terms [...] The document signed in Astrakhan' by the Kalmyk envoys who represented the Kalmyk *tayishis* was, in essence, an agreement between allies in which the Kalmyks promised peace and military cooperation. It was viewed exactly as such by the Kalmyk *tayishis*. Any such agreement was expected to put the other side under similar obligations. The Muscovite government, on the other hand, made no promises. It is not surprising that such a one-sided treaty could not last.[76]

The reality of Kalmyk-Russian relations was grasped by Tavernier, when he wrote that each year the Tsar sent gifts to the Kalmyks in order to retain their friendship.[77] As a consequence of this state of affairs, to quote Khodarkovsky once more, "as an independent ruler Daičin maintained relations with other foreign powers",[78] which holds true for the other Kalmyk chiefs as well. Therefore, they sent three ambassadors to China in the years after 1655.[79]

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[69] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 233, and Bedik, *Cehil sutun*, p. 337, respectively.

[70] Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, p. 601.

[71] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 249.

[72] Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, p. 175.

[73] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 241.

[74] Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, p. 601. Petrus Bedik was present at the oath of allegiance to the new Tsar, Fëdor III (1676-1682) taken by Ayuki near Astrachan' on 28 December 1676: *see* Bedik, *Cehil sutun*, p. 337.

[75] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 226-227, 252; *idem*, "War and Politics", pp. 36-56.

[76] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 241, 243-244.

[77] Tavernier, *Les six voyages*, p. 60. *Cf.* also Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 245. On the documents on Kalmyk-Russian diplomatic relations still extant in Russia's Central State Archive, *cf.* N. M. Rogozhin, "Posolski Books as a Source in the Study of Political Relations of Russia with Peoples and Countries of the Orient", in B. Kellner-Heinkele (ed.), *Altaica Berolinensia. The Concept of Sovereignty in the Altaic World. Permanent International Altaistic Conference, 34th Meeting, Berlin 21-26 July, 1991* (Wiesbaden, 1993), pp. 201-206.

[78] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 244.

[79] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 244. For several Torghut envoys carrying tribute to the Chinese court, *cf.* P. Pelliot, *Notes critiques d'histoire kalmouke* (Paris, 1960), pp. 27-29.

We find a Bukharan ambassador at the court of the Dzungar Erdeni Batur *khong tayiji* in 1640, while embassies were exchanged between the Torghut Luzang *tayiši* and Nadr Moḥammad Xān of Boxārā (1642 and 1644).[80] The Kalmyks exchanged several embassies with the Crimea in the 1650s and 1660s,[81] and exchanged letters with the Cossack rebel leader Sten'ka Razin in the years 1667-1672.[82] As for Ayuki, it is certain that he sent at least one diplomatic mission to Sobḥānqoli Xān of Boxārā in 1685,[83] and three more to the Porte in the years 1703-04, 1709 and 1710.[84] He also received a Chinese ambassador in 1714.[85] Leaving aside for the time being the Manchus, on whose attitude I have no specific information,[86] Russia, the Crimea and even the remote Ottoman court appear to have looked upon the Kalmyks as foreigners seeking protection and, therefore, as subjects. Conversely, the Uzbek rulers of Boxārā and Xive do not seem to have entertained any claim to suzerainty over the Kalmyks. In reality, the Kalmyk chiefs were simply conducting their own independent foreign policy. Nothing in their behaviour suggests that they were really trying to put themselves under the protection or the protectorate of a foreign power. Rather, they maintained relations with all the neighbouring polities in order to be able – if necessary – to play them one against the other. This means that, for instance, in 1661 in a letter addressed to Aleksej Michailovič (1645-1676), the Torghut Daičin *tayiši* went as far as describing himself as an ally of both the Tsar and the Khan of the Crimea.[87] Perhaps in 1655 (that is, in the same year of the first Kalmyk-Russian agreement), the same Daičin sent an embassy to Šāh ʿAbbās II, and more were sent in the following years.[88] Ayuki (1669-1724) as well, whose long reign marked the apogee of Kalmyk power, had diplomatic relations with the Safavid court.[89] Most likely, the only authority to which the Kalmyk chiefs may have

[80] Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 203 and 215.

[81] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 244-245, 247-251. Unfortunately, the Kalmyks go virtually unmentioned in A. W. Fisher, *Crimean Tatars* (Stanford, 1978).

[82] Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", n. 7 p. 65. The chief Torghut *tayiši*, Puntsuk (who had been a loyal ally of Russia until that time) and his son Ayuki even joined the rebellious Cossacks: cf. Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 250-251.

[83] Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 340.

[84] Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", pp. 67-71. The French scholar notes that the Kalmyks sent at least two more ambassadors to the Ottoman court between 1648 and 1703. Cf. also *Osmanlı devleti ile Kafkasya, Türkistan ve Kırım hanlıkları arasındaki münâsebetlere dâir arşiv belgeleri (1687-1908 yılları arası)* (Ankara, 1992), pp. 3-4, 63-65.

[85] Pelliot, *Notes critiques*, pp. 28-29; Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", n. 1 p. 66 and p. 71. "Rien n'est plus difficile que de définir les relations internationales de la Horde kalmuke sous le règne d'Ayuka, car ce dernier, sollicité par ses voisins, refusait de s'engager durablement d'un côté ou de l'autre, tout en multipliant des promesses d'amitié et de soumission aux Russes, Ottomans et Chinois, ce qui ne l'empêchait nullement de s'attaquer aux possessions de ses alliés et 'protecteurs' ": *cf.* Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", p. 66.

[86] The Manchu attitude towards the Kalmyks, however, can probably be guessed easily considering the Imperial Chinese habit of considering the surrounding peoples and polities as "barbarous vassals". A Chinese source has Ayuki calling himself "a foreign barbarian": *see* Pelliot, *Notes critiques*, p. 28.

[87] Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 248.

[88] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, pp. 224-225; Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 244. It is not easy to date this embassy with precision on the basis of the printed text of the *ʿAbbāsnāme* alone, since Vaḥid Qazvini put it somewhere between 1066/1655-56 and 1069/1658-59. A much later source such as Abu'l-Ḥasan Qazvini, *Favāyedoʾṣ-ṣafaviye*, ed. M. Mir Aḥmadi (Tehran, 1367), p. 70 has 1067/1656-57 as a date. Here I follow the dating proposed by Khodarkovsky.

[89] Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", n. 1 p. 66. On the presence of Kalmyk envoys at

felt to be truly subordinated was that of the Dalai Lama of Lhasa, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and the temporal ruler of Tibet. Indeed, it was the latter (or his regent) who bestowed the title of khan first on the Khošut Güüši, then on his grandson Galdan, and eventually on the latter's nephew, the Torghut Ayuki (in 1697).[90] The sources also point to the persistence among the Kalmyks of the notion of political legitimacy as belonging to the descendants of Chingghis Khan. Although this principle was interpreted and exploited by the Dalai Lamas in order to serve conveniently the interests of Tibetan Buddhism, it probably retained much of its vigour and force in the steppes.[91]

The Kalmyk attitude towards their would-be suzerains persisted until well into the eighteenth century,[92] and probably even more so towards those rulers whose states lay farther than Russia from Kalmyk territories and were therefore less vital to Kalmyk interests. In this sense, Safavid Persia was just one of the several states with which the Kalmyks maintained diplomatic relations. Analogously, it is interesting to observe how the Safavid point of view concerning the Kalmyks, as reflected in Persian narrative sources, is quite close to those of the Russian, Ottoman and Crimean courts. Vaḥid Qazvini's account of the 1655 embassy has it that the Kalmyks, despite their beastly nature, heard of Šāh ʿAbbās II's greatness and became eager to put the yoke of obedience to the Safavid house on their necks. Accordingly they sent an envoy, who witnessed the overwhelming magnificence of the Safavid court and obtained the joy of becoming a slave of the Shah. In his turn, Šāh ʿAbbās II graciously replied by sending his own ambassador to the Kalmyks. When read more carefully, however, Vaḥid Qazvini's narration betrays a different reality. The

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the Safavid court in 1685, *cf. Amoenitatum exoticarum politico-physico-medicarum fasciculi V [...] ab auctore Engelberto Kaempfero, D.* (Lemgovia, 1712), p. 230; E. Kaempfer, *Am Hofe des persischen Grosskönigs (1684-85)*, German transl. W. Hinz (Leipzig, 1940), p. 206.

[90] Miyawaki, "The Birth of the Oyirad Khanship", pp. 61-72; *idem*, "The Legitimacy of Khanship among the Oyirad", pp. 322-330. Thus, the Torghut chief Daičin may have signed his letters to the Tsar as "Daičin Khan" simply in order to place himself on the same level as his supposed suzerain: *see* Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", n. 2 p. 64; Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 244. According to Potocki, *Voyage*, vol. I, p. 67, the Kalmyk chiefs who were Russian subjects used to send envoys to the Dalai Lama "secretly" upon their accession to power in order to receive his blessing.

[91] Güüši at least was believed to be a descendant of a brother of Chinggis Khan, while the connections of Galdan and Ayuki with the family of the great Mongol conqueror were even looser and more questionable, relying as they did on female ascendancy alone: *see* Miyawaki, "The Birth of the Oyirad Khanship", pp. 64-73; *idem*, "The Legitimacy of Khanship among the Oyirad", pp. 326-331. However, the title of khan had somewhat the effect of "Chinggisifying" Ayuki and his house retroactively. In 1710, in a letter to the Ottoman Sultan, Ayuki stated that he and the Bashkirs were "all descendants of Chinggis [Khan] and originated from the same clan": *see* Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", pp. 69-70, 75-76; Miyawaki, "The Legitimacy of Khanship among the Oyirad", p. 331. Lemercier-Quelquejay rightly stated that loyalty to the Chinggisid principle cut across the division between Muslim and Buddhist peoples of the steppes, and that Ayuki was trying to capitalize on his title of khan in order to obtain the Chinggisid political legitimacy that he did not have by birth. Over time, Ayuki's claim must have gained acceptance. Jan Potocki saw Muslim Noghays paying homage to a Kalmyk prince. He stated that "ils respectent en lui le sang de Tchinghiz-khan, son opulence et son caractère moral": *see* Potocki, *Voyage*, vol. I, p. 65. A genealogical tree, ascribing a Chinggisid origin to the Torghut princes, was discovered near Astrachan' as late as 1903: *see* Miyawaki, "The Birth of the Oyirad Khanship", pp. 43, 72; *idem*, "The Legitimacy of Khanship among the Oyirad", p. 331.

[92] The Kalmyks recognized themselves as Russian subjects only in September 1724: *see* Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", n. 4 p. 226; *idem*, "War and Politics", p. 49.

chronicler recorded the name of the Kalmyk ruler, Daičin, with remarkable exactitude. He also mentioned the name of the Shah's envoy, Xān Moḥammad Beyg Qarādāğlu. This is quite unusual, since Safavid sources seldom record the names of non-Muslim rulers and of the ambassadors sent to them. The very fact that Šāh ʿAbbās II had the Kalmyk envoy accompanied back by an ambassador of his own points to the importance of the latter's mission. Finally, the Shah countered the customary *piškeš* brought by the Kalmyk with his own gifts for Daičin, including a sable-fur hat and robes of honour. All these details show that, at that time at least, the Kalmyks were not seen at the Safavid court as poor and destitute barbarians living in some far-away Central Asian waste land. On the contrary, they represented a political entity of some importance.[93] Vaḥid Qazvini also wrote that the Kalmyk envoy arrived at the Safavid court together with some unspecified Turkmens. This may simply mean that the Kalmyk delegation was ethnically mixed. However, sending a Muslim envoy to a foreign ruler (Muslim or not) would have been nothing new or unusual to a Kalmyk chief. An envoy sent to Russia as early as 1608 was named Devlet/Däulät.[94] The envoy sent by the Khošut Čagan *tayiši* to Tobol'sk in 1668 was named Ḥaqqnaẓar, while a Kalmyk ambassador to the Russian court in 1675 was a Bukharan Muslim with a following of Kalmyk retainers.[95] At least two Kalmyk envoys to Constantinople, in 1703-04 and 1709, were Muslim Noghays.[96] Similarly, the first Siamese ambassador to reach the Safavid court in 1684 was not only a Muslim but a Persian, the trader Ḥājji Salim Māzandarāni,[97] and the Ethiopian King Iyāsu I (1682-1706) sent an Abyssinian Muslim, Ādam b. ʿAbdu'r-Razzāq as an envoy to the Safavid court.[98] It is then perfectly possible that Daičin chose a Muslim Turkmen as the first Kalmyk ambassador to the Safavid court. The importance attached in Persia to this diplomatic mission is further confirmed by its mention in a source as late as the *Favāyedo'ṣ-ṣafaviye*, which was composed in India between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth.[99]

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[93] One may compare the favourable reception given to the Kalmyk ambassadors with that given to the envoys of another ruler on whose country the Safavid court was presumably not very well-informed, that is, Ethiopia. In 1664, the ambassador sent by King Fāsiladas (1632-1667) was "dismissed very badly" by Šāh ʿAbbās II: *see* E. van Donzel, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia, 1642-1700. Documents Relating to the Journeys of Khodja Murād* (Istanbul, 1979), p. 36; *idem*, "Ethiopia II. Islamic Period", in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. IX, p. 9.

[94] Pelliot, *Notes critiques*, n. 158 p. 77.

[95] Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 287 and 431. For analogous instances of Bukharans in the service of Kalmyk chiefs as ambassadors, *cf.* Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 430-431.

[96] Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", pp. 67-68 and 70. A third envoy, who visited Constantinople in 1710, was a Kalmyk but bore the non-Kalmyk (although not necessarily Muslim) name of Pahlavānqoli Beyg: *see* Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", p. 70.

[97] *Amoenitatum exoticarum*, pp. 237-238; Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, pp. 212-213; M. I. Marcinkowski, "The Iran-Siamese Connection: An Iranian Community in the Thai Kingdom of Ayutthaya", *Iranian Studies*, 35, 1-3 (2002), pp. 34-35 and n. 67 p. 35.

[98] Van Donzel, "Ethiopia II. Islamic Period", p. 9. Ādam b. ʿAbdu'r-Razzāq met an official of the Dutch VOC in the Yemeni city of Muḫā in 1699 on his way back from Persia: *see idem*, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia*, p. 139. On two Muslim emissaries sent by Fāsiladas to the Imam of Yemen, *see idem*, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia*, p. 5 and n. 3 p. 188.

[99] Abu'l-Ḥasan Qazvini, *Favāyedo'ṣ-ṣafaviye*, p. 70. The enigmatic name "Vān, Ḥoseyn" attributed to the Kalmyk ruler in the printed edition of the text is simply one of the editor's countless misreadings of foreign names and should be read "Dāyčin" instead.

Daičin's is not the only Kalmyk name preserved in Safavid sources. The *ʿAbbāsnāme* seemingly mentions a chief called Mirsane (the relevant passage of the printed text is not clear), which could correspond to Amursana, a name made famous in the 18th century by the last independent Oirat ruler of Dzungaria.[100] Ayuki, who became *tayiši* of the Torghuts in 1669 and khan of the four Kalmyk tribes in 1697, is mentioned by name twice in the *Dastur-e Šahriyārān.*[101] This is quite understandable for a man who has been called "le dernier des grands souverains nomades",[102] and indeed he is also mentioned by Petrus Bedik.[103] The *Dastur-e Šahriyārān* also mentions "ʿArab Tāl", that is, Arabtan, the son of a cousin of Ayuki's.[104] The presence of these names is not devoid of importance, if we pay attention to the fact that virtually no European ruler is mentioned by name in Safavid chronicles. Likewise, King Narai of Siam (1656-1688) is not mentioned by name even once by Moḥammad Rabiʿ b. Moḥammad Ebrāhim in his account of the Safavid embassy to his court.[105]

If the Kalmyks adapted themselves remarkably well and quickly to the political situation of the Caspian steppe, their neighbours too adapted themselves quickly to the presence of the Kalmyks on their borders. Their arrival certainly engendered what has been called "a special cultural dichotomy and a religious trichotomy",[106] but religious difference *per se* does not seem to have represented an obstacle to diplomacy.[107] On a personal level, a

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[100] Vaḥid Qazvini, *ʿAbbāsnāme*, p. 202.

[101] Moḥammad Ebrāhim Naṣiri, *Dastur-e šahriyārān*, pp. 91, 140.

[102] Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Les Kalmuks de la Volga", p. 65.

[103] Bedik, *Cehil sutun*, p. 336. Petrus Bedik transcribed his name as "Heiuchae".

[104] His son according to Moḥammad Ebrāhim Naṣiri, *Dastur-e šahriyārān*, p. 140. *Cf.* however Pelliot, *Notes critiques*, pp. 28, n. 214 p. 83, 109 (*s. vv. Arabǰur* and *Arabtan*) and, above all, the genealogies provided on p. 29. According to the French scholar the name is of Tibetan origin, and in this case it would not mean "Arabian body". ʿAli Akbar Xaṭā'i, *Xaṭāynāme*, pp. 67-69 mentions the Oirat chief, Esen *tayiši* (1439-1455) several times; several Kalmyk personal names and titles can be found in *Histoire des Mogols*, vol. I, pp. 323, 325-327; vol. II, pp. 346, 349-350.

[105] Marcinkowski, "The Iran-Siamese Connection", p. 41.

[106] Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, p. 175.

[107] Besides the episode of Ayuki's support for Yādgār Xān, see for instance the alliance in 1678 between the ruler of the Buddhist Oirats of Dzungaria, Galdan Khan, the Dalai Lama and the Naqšbandi Xwāje Āfāq Hedāyato'llāh of Kāšġar (1679-1694) against the last nominal Chaghataid ruler of Kāšġar, the Muslim Esmāʿil Xān: *see* Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, pp. 579-580, 607-608; I. Togan, "Chinese Turkestan V. Under the Khojas", in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. V, p. 474; Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, pp. 170, 173; J. Paul, "Khwādjas", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Supplement, p. 523. In the words of Grousset, "sur le terrain des intérêts politiques et nonobstant l'entière opposition des doctrines [...] les deux cléricalismes se comprirent". After reinstalling Xwāje Āfāq to power, the Oirats imposed their suzerainty on him. The journey of Xwāje Āfāq to Lhasa provided material to Muslim hagiographical narrative as well, as it can be found in the otherwise historical work of Moḥammad Ṣādeq Kāšġari's *Taẕkere-ye Xwājegān*. According to one of the two known versions of this episode, Xwāje Āfāq proved his own superiority (and that of the Muslim religion) by outdoing the Dalai Lama in a "compétition de magie" and thereby obtained the submission of the Tibetans. As Zarcone put it, "dans son [the author's] esprit [...] le *khwâja* avait obtenu l'aide du Dalaï-Lama parce qu'il l'avait vaincu sur le plan religieux et mystique": *see* T. Zarcone, "Soufis d'Asie centrale au Tibet aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles", *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, 1-2 (1996), pp. 328-337 (my quotations from pp. 334 and 337). However, I believe that the whole story should rather be interpreted as Kāšġari's attempt to justify the recourse on the part of Xwāje Āfāq to two heathen potentates for help against a fellow Muslim. Pious or more conservative-minded Muslims did not necessarily share their rulers' pragmatic attitude towards unbelievers: *see* for instance Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination", pp. 219-246.

Muslim prince, Abu'l-Ġāzi Xān, was able to spend one year among the Kalmyks around 1640-41, learning their language as well as their "manners and habits".[108] In the years around 1700, the father of the aforementioned Arabtan bore the Muslim name Nazar-Mamut[109]: this circumstance is made more interesting by the fact that he was Ayuki's cousin and, in the words of Pelliot, "un membre de la famille princière des Turghut". Since Nazar-Mamut's elder son seems to have been Dorji (or Dorji Nazar), the commander of the troops sent by Ayuki to support Yādgār Xān's bid for the throne of Xive in 1712,[110] one may wonder whether this branch of the Torghut ruling clan had any special connection with Islam. As for international political relations, religious difference did not prevent, for instance, the commander of the Orthodox Christian Cossacks of Zaporože from describing the Kalmyks in the following terms, in a letter addressed to the Tsar in 1663: "They are great horse riders and have a great mastering of swords. They are steadfast and brave in character. They are dreadful in battle. They never retreat, although they worship idols".[111] In 1620, the daughter of the Torghut Kalmyk chief, Kho-Ürlük married the son of the last Muslim ruler of Sibir, Išim Xān b. Küčüm Xān.[112] Around 1643, the Khošut Kalmyk *tayiši* Khundelen regarded the Kazak chief Jahāngir "as a son".[113] Engelbert Kaempfer recorded the disparaging treatment meted out to a delegation of twenty-one Kalmyk envoys on occasion of the royal *Nowruz* audience in 1685, in which they were seated behind the musicians. The Kalmyks received a somewhat better place only after they threatened to leave the audience hall.[114] According to the German traveller, they were the envoys of as many members of the Kalmyk princely house: in other words, they were quite an important delegation. One may therefore assume that such a major breech in diplomatic protocol must have had specific reasons, political or otherwise, rather than being the result of an abstract "sense of cultural superiority" held by the Safavids towards their northern neighbours. It has been remarked that the basic religious categories (Muslims vs non-Muslims, Shiites vs Sunnis, People of the Book vs Heathens) through which foreigners were identified and understood

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[108] *Histoire des Mogols*, vol. I, p. 37; vol. II, pp. 36, 338; on this episode, *cf.* also Munis & Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbāl*, p. 44 and n. 245 p. 559. The host of the prince was apparently Šunkei, the son of the Torghut *tayiši* Kho-Ürlük: *see* Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 234 and in particular n. 36 p. 234. Probably it was not by chance that the Kalmyks were supporting Abu'l-Ġāzi Xān against Esfandiyār Xān in 1640-41: *see* Burton, *The Bukharans*, pp. 203-204.

[109] Pelliot, *Notes critiques*, pp. 28-29, 179-180 (*s. vv. Najar-Mamut*, *Nasarmamut* and *Nazar-Mamut*), and nn. 5 p. 48, 158 p. 77.

[110] Pelliot, *Notes critiques*, p. 29; Munis & Agahi, *Firdaws al-Iqbāl*, n. 302 p. 571.

[111] Quoted from <http://kalm.ru/en/cossacks.html>.

[112] Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, p. 601; Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 229. The relations between the Kalmyks and the Bashkirs of Išim Xān must have been well established by that time, since together the two peoples had raided the surroundings of Ufa as early as 1617: *see* Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", p. 229.

[113] Generally speaking, the Kazaks and the Kalmyks were long-time foes. However, Khundelen of the Khošuts was also the enemy of the Dzungars and the Torghuts (who were allied with each other), and the latter tribe used to raid the territory of the Khan of Boxārā, who was the suzerain of the Kazaks (at least, of those headed by Jahāngir). Threatened by the Dzungar chief Erdeni Batur, Khundelen sought and obtained Moscow's military support. The events of the years 1643-44 are interesting as they graphically show how political interests (and the alliances they dictated) cut through ethnic and religious affinities or differences: *see* Khodarkovsky, "The Arrival of the Kalmyks", pp. 238-239; Burton, *The Bukharans*, p. 220 (*cf.* also *passim* for other instances of Kazak-Kalmyk military cooperation).

[114] *Amoenitatum exoticarum*, p. 230; Kaempfer, *Am Hofe*, p. 206.

in Safavid Persia did not function automatically but were modified and refined by other criteria, such as perceptions of political power and "style".[115] Its rhetorical devices and patronizing tone notwithstanding, Vaḥid Qazvini's account of Daičin's embassy shows that this held true in the case of the Kalmyks as well: although pagan and wild, they were a powerful neighbour who could not be ignored. As in the case of the relations existing between Eṣfahān and the Siamese Buddhist court of Ayutthaya, the reason of state must have prevailed over such feelings of superiority, which undoubtedly existed, also advocating the establishment of viable relations between the Safavid court and the Buddhist Kalmyks.[116]

Earlier versions of the present article were read as papers at the 8th European Conference on Central Asian Studies (Bordeaux, 23-27 September 2002) and at the 5th European Conference of Iranian Studies (Ravenna, 6-11 October 2003). I would like to thank Dr. Christoph Marcinkowski for providing me with helpful references to the *Safine-ye soleymāni* at a time when neither the Persian text nor its English translation were available to me, Dr. Roland Steinacher for bringing Rohrbacher's important work *The Historians of Late Antiquity* to my attention, and Prof. Houchang Chehabi for his reading of the final draft of this article.

[115] Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination", pp. 225-226.

[116] Generally speaking, the history of Safavid political and diplomatic relations with Central Asian rulers needs further investigation. For instance, on 22 July 1712 an anonymous French missionary in Eṣfahān reported that on the following day eight Kazak (*Kazaques*) envoys were to take leave together with one "Tatar" (*Tartare*), one Crimean and two Uzbek emissaries: *see* Paris, *Archives des Missions Etrangères*, vol. 354, fol. 501.